

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 EUR-08 SP-02

L-01 PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00

ACDA-10 MC-01 IGA-01 DHA-02 EB-04 /062 W

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P R 251100Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9821

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GABORONE 0929

LIMDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, BC

SUBJECT: GOB INTERNAL SECURITY NEEDS AND U.S. POLICY INTERESTS

REF: A. GABORONE 739; B. STATE 70318

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENT KHAMA'S PRINCIPAL SECURITY ADVISOR, PHIL STEENKAMP TOOK OCCASION OF MY MEETING WITH HIM APRIL 22 ON OTHER BUSINESS (A) TO EXPLAIN REASONS, INCLUDING LIKELIHOOD OF CIVIL WAR IN RHODESIA, FOR URGENCY IN CREATING BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE (BDF), (B) TO DESCRIBE ITS SIZE, MISSION AND RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY, (C) TO OUTLINE MODEST BDF REQUIREMENTS FOR ARMS AND EQUIPMENT, (D) TO EMPHASIZE THE NATIONAL CONSENSUS IN SUPPORT OF THE BDF AND UNANIMOUS CABINET DECISION TO TURN TO THE U.S. AS THE MAJOR SOURCE
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OF BDF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT THE GOB REQUEST FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE FROM USG BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITIES IT PRESENTS TO ENHANCE AND DEFEND AGREED U.S. POLICY GOALS AND NATIONAL INTERESTS BY SUPPORTING ONE OF THE REMAINING STABLE, FREE, FULLY DEMOCRATIC, NON-RACIAL, HUMAN-RIGHTS RESPECTING REGIMES IN THE WORLD. END SUMMARY.

2. BDF MISSION. IN APRIL 22 DISCUSSION WITH PHIL STEENKAMP, WHO IS PERMSEC AT PRESIDENCY, CABINET SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT'S PRINCIPAL SECURITY ADVISOR, HE COMMENTED THAT CABINET DECISION TO FORM BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE (BDF) HAD BEEN UNANIMOUS, ONE OF THE FEW HE COULD REMEMBER. STEENKAMP NOTED PRINCIPAL MISSION OF THE BDF WOULD BE PATROL OF RHODESIAN BORDER. IT WOULD ALSO BE AVAILABLE, HE NOTED, IN THE EVENT OF "STRIKES AND RIOTS AND TO PROTECT REFUGEES". EMPHASIZING THE SERIOUSNESS OF BOTSWANA'S NEED, HE SAID THAT THE BDF'S MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION WOULD BE TO MAINTAIN BOTSWANA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY "IN THE EVENT OF CIVIL WAR IN RHODESIA WHICH NOW APPEARS IN THE CARDS". HE FORESAW SKIRMISHES AMONG OPPOSING NATIONALIST FORCES ON ONE HAND, AND BETWEEN NATIONALISTS AND RHODESIAN ARMY ON THE OTHER, DRIFTING ACROSS THE BORDER UNLESS GOB COULD STOP THEM.

3. NATIONALIST STRENGTH. ASKED WHAT CAUSED HIM TO REACH SUCH A PESSIMISTIC CONCLUSION, STEENKAMP COMMENTED HE HAS KNOWN NKOMO FOR YEARS, THAT HE WAS ALWAYS AMBITIOUS BUT IN THE PAST WAS TENSE AND LACKED REAL STRENGTH OR SELF-CONFIDENCE. STEENKAMP SAID HE WAS STRUCK RECENTLY BY THE CHANGE IN NKOMO'S PERSONALITY; AT LUANDA, FOR EXAMPLE, HE WAS AFFABLE, BACKSLAPPING AND RELAXED. SUCH CONFIDENCE WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, STEENKAMP ADDED, GIVEN THE FACT NKOMO HAS AN ESTIMATED "12,000 TROOPS IN ZAMBIA AND NUMBERS ARE GROWING". BY CONTRAST, HE SAID ZANU IN MOZAMBIQUE WAS RELATIVELY WEAK AND DISUNITED. ONE SPECIFIC CONSEQUENCE OF NKOMO'S CHANGED ATTITUDE WAS HIS "MUCH MORE INDEPENDENT STANCE" VIS-A-VIS FRONTLINE PRES-

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IDENTS.

4. SOVIET ROLE. STEENKAMP ADDED THAT HE ASSUMED USSR WAS UNDERWRITING THE SIGNIFICANT COST OF TRANSPORTING NKOMO RECRUITS FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA. HERETOFORE, HE SAID, SHORTAGE OF FUNDS HAD BEEN THE REASON FOR DELAY IN SENDING RECRUITS NORTH; NOW IT IS PLANES AND PILOTS THAT ARE LACKING. ACCORDING TO PRESENT PROJECTIONS, STEENKAMP EXPECTED TEN FLIGHTS PER WEEK FROM BOTSWANA (SELEBI-PIKWE) TO ZAMBIA. WITH 66 PERSONS AVERAGE PER FLIGHT, THIS WOULD BE 660 NKOMO RECRUITS PER WEEK FROM BOTSWANA. HE SAID 1200 NKOMO SUPPORTERS HAVE BEEN SENT TO ZAMBIA IN RECENT WEEKS.

5. MUZOREWA FOLLOWERS. AS EVIDENCE OF GOB SECURITY CONCERNS FROM REFUGEE FLOW, STEENKAMP NOTED THERE WERE PRESENTLY 400 MUZOREWA SUPPORTERS IN THE FRANCISTOWN AREA "WHO HAVE NO PLACE TO GO". GOB HAS TO BE SURE THEY ARE SEPARATE FROM NKOMO PEOPLE. THIS IS BEYOND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF POLICE AND MAKES BDF ALL THE MORE NECESSARY, ESPECIALLY SINCE EXODUS

OF MUZOREWA FOLLOWERS FROM RHODESIA IS ACCELERATING.

6. SIZE OF BDF. IN VIEW OF THESE DIVERSE RESPONSIBILITIES, I ASKED STEENKAMP IF DECISION HAD BEEN MADE CONCERNING SIZE OF BDF. HE SAID CONFIDENTIALLY THAT PLANS WERE FOR ONLY ABOUT 1,050, OF WHOM 450 CURRENTLY IN POLICE MOBILE UNIT (PMU) WILL CONSTITUTE THE NUCLEUS. THE PMU WILL "DISAPPEAR",

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HE NOTED. THREE SUCCESSIVE CONTINGENTS OF 200 RECRUITS EACH OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WILL BRING THE FORCE UP TO THE GOAL OF 1050. (REGULAR "BOTSWANA POLICE" WILL NUMBER 1800 ACCORDING TO STEENKAMP, I.E., LARGER THAN THE BDF.) DECISION HAS BEEN MADE, STEENKAMP ADDED, TO BUILD FOUR NEW BDF CAMPS: ONE A FEW MILES WEST OF GABORONE, A SECOND AT FRANCISTOWN, A THIRD AT SELEBI-PIKWE, AND A FOURTH IN THE FAR NORTH AT KASANE. HE SAID THE LOCATIONS REFLECT THE PRINCIPAL AREAS OF CONCERN. INCIDENTIALLY, HE NOTED THAT THE PMU CAMP NEAR GABORONE AIRPORT WILL BE CLOSED BECAUSE IT IS BUILT ON UNSTABLE GROUND AND FOUNDATIONS WERE CRUMBLING.

7. U.S. ROLE. AT THIS POINT STEENKAMP SAID HE HOPED U.S.

WOULD BE ABLE TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO GOB REQUEST FOR MODEST
NUMBER OF RIFLES AND VEHICLES NECESSARY TO GIVE THE BDF
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MOBILITY AND CREDIBILITY. HE REFERRED TO TIBONE'S DEMARCHE
TO DCM (REF A) AND SAID HE WISHED TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE
REQUEST TO U.S. FOR ASSISTANCE REPRESENTED RARE UNANIMOUS
CABINET DECISION. HE URGED THAT PRESS STORIES ABOUT "PROGRESS-
IVE" OR "RADICAL" GOB MINISTERS BE DISREGARDED. SPECIFICALLY,
HE ADDED, THE FACT MINISTER KWELAGOBÉ OCCASIONALLY WEARS
MAO SUITS WAS "MISLEADING"; HE WAS NOT THE MOST "PROGRESSIVE"
OF MINISTERS. STEENKAMP VOLUNTEERED THAT GOB NEEDS WERE VERY
MODEST, NAMELY, 600 MORE M-16 RIFLES ("ARMALITE AUTOMATIC")
PLUS LIVE AMMUNITION, A NUMBER OF SCOUT CAR OR TROOP CARRIER
VEHICLES AND PERHAPS SOME RADIOS. TRAINING COULD BE PROVIDED
BY THE UK.

8. THE PRESENT SITUATION WAS MORE PRECARIOUS THAN ANYONE
DARED ADMIT, STEENKAMP CONCLUDED. THIS HAD STRUCK HIM FORCE-
FULLY EARLIER THAT DAY WHEN HE REALIZED THAT THE ENTIRE PMU,
WHICH FORMED THE HONOR GUARD FOR PRESIDENT KHAMA'S DEPARTURE
THAT MORNING, HAD A TOTAL OF 150 ROUNDS OF LIVE AMMUNITIONDM
HE STRESSED AGAIN THE STRICTLY INTERNAL SECURITY NATURE OF THE
CURRENT NEED AND THE INDISPENSABLE REQUIREMENT THAT GOB TAKE
MEASURES TO PROTECT ITSELF FROM THE "PROBABILITY" OF WARRING
FACTIONS IN RHODESIA.

9. COMMENT: A) STEENKAMP IS REGARDED AS THE BEST INFORMED
GOB OFFICIAL ON SECURITY MATTERS AND ONE OF THE CLOSEST
TO PRESIDENT KHAMA. (HIS OFFICE IS ADJACENT TO PRESIDENT'S.)
HE IS KNOWN AS A BALANCED OBSERVER, NOT AN ALARMIST. HE HAS
NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE CAPABILITIES OF THE BDF. IN FACT,
HE TOLD ME HE HAD REPEATEDLY OPPOSED THE IDEA OF A BDF ---
UNTIL RECENTLY. NOW HE IS WHOLLY CONVINCED BDF IS A NECES-
SITY AND THAT IT MUST BE ORGANIZED QUICKLY. IN THIS, EVERYONE,
BEGINNING WITH PRESIDENT KHAMA, IS IN AGREEMENT. THE FACTS
AND LOGIC IN FAVOR OF BDF SEEM IRREFUTABLE. THE THREAT IS
THERE. THE BDF EXISTS ON PAPER, HAVING BEEN UNANIMOUSLY
APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT; IT WILL SOON EXIST IN FACT. THE
QUESTION REMAINS: FROM WHERE WILL THE BDF'S MODEST ARMS AND
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EQUIPMENT NEEDS COME --- AND WITH THEM THE INFLUENCE, BOTH
REAL AND SYMBOLIC, THAT A SUPPLIER ROLE CONNOTES AT THIS STAGE
OF DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. B) THE
OBSTACLES TO U.S. TAKING ON THAT ROLE SEEM FORMIDABLE INDEED

(REF B). WE ALSO HAVE THE EXAMPLE OF INTERMINABLE DELAY AND CONFUSION IN DELIVERING 400 AR-18'S AND AMMUNITION ORDERED BY GOB SOME TWO YEARS AGO AND NOT YET RECEIVED. IF WE CANNOT BE MORE EFFECTIVE AND POSITIVE NOW, WE ARE IN EFFECT SAYING THAT U.S. SUPPORT FOR ITS POLICY OBJECTIVES AND INTERESTS (E.G., TO UPHOLD THIS FREE, DEMOCRATIC, NON-RACIAL REGIME, FULLY RESPECTFUL OF HUMAN RIGHTS) FALLS SHORT OF PROVIDING SECURITY ASSISTANCE, EVEN OF THE MOST MODEST NATURE; THAT U.S. POLICY GOALS ARE CONDITIONAL ON NOT REQUIRING ARMS AND EQUIPMENT TRANSFERS TO ACHIEVE THEM. C) FROM ALL EVIDENCE

AVAILABLE (INCLUDING PRES KHAMA'S SPEECHES AND TALKS WITH HIM AND OTHER MINISTERS CONCERNED) I AM CONVINCED THAT IF THE U.S. (OR UK) DOES NOT REACT AFFIRMATIVELY TO BOTSWANA'S REQUEST, THE GOB WILL LOOK TO THE USSR FOR ARMS. PRESIDENT KHAMA TOLD ME AS MUCH IN A RECENT INFORMAL CONVERSATION WHEN HE EXPRESSED HOPE THE U.S. COULD "SEE ITS WAY CLEAR" FOR MEETING GOB NEEDS, THAT "FOR A YEAR BOTSWANA HAS HAD A CARROT DANGLED BEFORE IT BUT HAS CHOSEN NOT TO BITE". IN THE APRIL 18 DAILY NEWS, MINISTER KWELAGOBÉ IS QUOTED AS SAYING BOTSWANA "WILL BUY ARMS FROM FRIENDLY COUNTRIES REGARDLESS OF IDEOLOGICAL LEANINGS SO LONG AS SUCH ARMS ARE EFFECTIVE AND REASONABLY PRICED."

10. ACTION REQUESTED: IN VIEW OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS FOR U.S. INTERESTS, BOTH SHORT- AND LONG-RANGE, LOCAL AND REGIONAL, OF A SOVIET ROLE AS A SUPPLIER OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT TO BDF, I URGE THAT GOB REQUEST BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED AND EVERY POSSIBILITY EXPLORED FOR MEETING GOB NEEDS (AND UPHOLDING U.S. INTERESTS) IN A TIMELY WAY.
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